

2544851

Assurance visit

Information about this children's home

The home is registered to accommodate up to three children or young people who may have emotional and/or behavioural difficulties. It is owned by a private organisation.

The manager was registered in December 2019.

Visit dates: 2 and 3 September 2020

Previous inspection date: Not previously inspected

Previous inspection judgement: Not previously inspected

Information about this visit

Due to COVID-19 (coronavirus), Ofsted suspended all routine inspections in March 2020. As part of a phased return to routine inspection, we are undertaking assurance visits to children's social care services that are inspected under the social care common inspection framework (SCCIF).

At these visits, inspectors evaluate the extent to which:

- children are well cared for
- children are safe
- leaders and managers are exercising strong leadership.

This visit was carried out under the Care Standards Act 2000, following the published guidance for assurance visits.

Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills is leading Ofsted's work into how England's social care system has delivered child-centred practice and care within the context of the restrictions placed on society during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from the visit

We identified no serious or widespread concerns in relation to the care or protection of children at this assurance visit.

The care of children

Staff work effectively with a range of professionals to help children and young people to make good progress in all areas from their starting points.

Children and young people contribute to their care planning. Their wishes and feelings are listened to and acted on as part of their care arrangements. This helps children and young people to build and maintain positive relationships with staff who look after them.

Children and young people enjoy activities of their choice. During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff were creative and helped children and young people to enjoy activities in the home. This has created normality and structure for children and young people during the pandemic period.

Children and young people continued to keep in touch with their families and friends during the COVID-19 pandemic. Staff ensured that this was supported in line with government guidance.

Staff have helped children and young people to understand the risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. This has helped to educate children and young people on how to reduce the risks of the virus and how to stay healthy.

The safety of children

Staff follow safeguarding procedures and understand how to keep children safe.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, staff have completed a range of training courses via online forums. This means that they have been able to maintain and increase their skills and knowledge so that they can meet the needs of the children and young people they look after.

Staff support children and young people to learn how to keep themselves safe via regular key-worker sessions. Topics covered include exploring emotions and staying safe in a range of settings, including online. This has helped to reduce behaviour incidents in the home.

Staff follow protocols to aid the safe return of children and young people when they go missing from home. This includes children and young people having opportunities to speak to an independent adult on their return. Systems for recording the feedback from these visits make it difficult to show themes and trends.

Consequences that children and young people receive for negative behaviours are fair, and this was supported by the children's and young people's comments. However, staff do not consistently record and reflect what restorative approaches are considered.

Leaders and managers

The manager ensures that children and young people have access to effective support services. Independent advocates are available for children and young people to talk to. An independent advocate was able to listen to the worries of one young person and act on their behalf. This resulted in positive outcomes for that young person. This helps children and young people to feel valued and listened to.

Regular visits by an independent person have taken place since the home was registered, some remotely during the lockdown period. Recommendations made by the independent visitor are met in reasonable timescales. The manager values feedback from his independent visitor to help drive improvements forward.

The leadership team has effective systems in place to monitor children and young people's progress. This means that progress is regularly reviewed to ensure that they receive the support they need. A professional commented, 'The team know[s] the young people really well and respond[s] to them on an individual basis.'

The manager ensures that his staff team has an induction, training and regular supervisions. This provides the staff with opportunities to develop the skills and experience they need to help care for the children and young people. Children and young people receive better care as a result.

What does the home need to do to improve?

Recommendations

- When a child returns to the home after being missing from care or away from the home without permission, the responsible local authority must provide an opportunity for the child to have an independent return home interview. Homes should take account of information provided by such interviews when assessing risks and putting arrangements in place to protect each child. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 45, paragraph 9.30)
- Regulation 19(2) details sanctions that are prohibited in behaviour management. Any sanctions used to address poor behaviour should be restorative in nature, to help children recognise the impact of their behaviour on themselves, other children, the staff caring for them and the wider community. In some cases, it will be important for children to make reparation in some form to anyone hurt by their behaviour and the staff in the home should be skilled to support the child to

understand this and carry it out. ('Guide to the children's homes regulations including the quality standards', page 46, paragraph 9.38)

Children's home details

Unique reference number: 2544851

Registered provider: Alexanders House Limited

Responsible individual: David Palmer

Registered manager: David Watson

Inspector

Jacqueline Tate, Social Care Inspector



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